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Concurrently, all practical details of the production of helium-borne airships and of the navigation of this type of craft were developed by the airship production section of the Navy. At the same time, under the direction of Professor McLennan, plans were prepared and steps taken to erect and equip a station for purifying the helium which might become contaminated in service. Experimental investigations were also initiated with the object of developing the possible technical and scientific uses of helium. In particular, balance and spectroscopic methods for testing the purity of the gas were worked out, studies on the relative permeability of balloon fabrics to hydrogen and helium were commenced, and experiments were begun to exploit the use of helium in gas-filled incandescent lamps, gas-filled arc lamps, and thermionic valves. The equipment provided for the purification of contaminated helium in large quantities supplied the major portion of the apparatus required to liquefy helium, and arrangements were therefore made to produce this gas in a liquid form.

The advances already made by the time the armistice commenced warrants the opinion that at the end of another year large supplies of helium would have been produced within the empire at a low cost, helium-filled aircraft would have been in service, and great progress would have been made in exploiting the technical and scientific uses of this gas.

#### SCIENTIFIC ITEMS

WE record with regret the death of Charles Leander Doolittle, Flower professor of astronomy, emeritus; at the University of Pennsylvania and director of the Flower Observatory; of John Wallace Baird, professor of experimental psychology in Clark University; of Captain Theodore de Booy, the archeologist and explorer; of G. Carey Foster, formerly principal of University College, London, and previously professor of physics there, and of R. A. E. Blanchard, professor of parasitology in the faculty of medicine, University of Paris.

DR. WILLIAM WILLIAMS KEEN, the distinguished surgeon, had conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of Pennsylvania on University Day. Dr. Keen is the only commissioned officer in the present war who was a commissioned officer during the Civil War.—Dr. Livingston Farrand has resigned the presidency of the University of Colorado to become the executive head of the American Red Cross. Dr. Farrand was formerly professor of anthropology at Columbia University.

THE work on volcanology at Kilauea has been placed under the U. S. Weather Bureau. The transfer was effective on February 15 and the appointment of the Director Professor T. A. Jaggar has been approved. An appropriation of \$10,000 for the year is made by the government for continuing the work heretofore maintained by the Volcano Research Association.